

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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THE COMMON SENSE OF IT.

After the much, but not the all, that has been said on the subject of church education, there remains a single consideration so conclusive that after it is said there is nothing else to say. It is this, that as a rule our churches can only depend for safe and sympathetic pastors upon men who are bred in our own homes and educated in our own schools. (Notable exceptions to this rule in the Brethren church only confirm the statement.) Our doctrine is peculiar and exclusive, so much so that it is unnatural and unreasonable to expect anyone untrained in that doctrine from infancy to understand it, or to be in intellectual and spiritual sympathy with it. For example, we would not expect a young man born in a Methodist family, brought up on Methodist influences and trained in Methodist schools to make a good, efficient and loyal Brethren pastor. Now it is only modifying the illustration a little to suppose a young man born and bred in a Brethren family, but trained in a Methodist school. The family training may persevere in the midst of the radically different atmosphere of the school, and it may not. The probability is that it will be greatly modified, so that if the young man is not altogether lost to the Brethren church, he will have become so "broad" that he will not know whether he is a Tunker or a Methodist. Either result unfits him for the office of a pastor in the Brethren church. Results are not helped very much by supposing this scion of a Brethren family getting his education in a non-sectarian school where religious influences are conspicuous for their absence. To hand the young mind over, during the formative period, to the world or the devil is certainly not a sensible way of making a good pastor.

The whole question is resolved into this, that not only the prosperity of our church but its very existence is bound up in the problem of church education. Our churches must have pastors trained from childhood in sympathy with our peculiar institutions, thoroughly imbued with the genius and spirit of them, or else it is only a question of time when they will cease to be Brethren churches, and will become something else. Really this question of denomina-

tional education is no longer a question. It is a problem, doubtless, but not a question. It has been settled long ago by all the denominations, so that they no longer discuss whether they *should have* their own schools, but *how to get them*. If the necessity exists among Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and others who do not greatly differ from each other, how much more emphatically does it exist among the more peculiar and exclusive sects. The wise German Baptists have recognized it, and the world has rarely ever seen such enthusiasm and thoroughness in denominational education. They are building and supporting flourishing schools everywhere, and they are making these schools the most efficient conservators of their peculiar institutions. The future historian of the German Baptist church will dwell with important emphasis upon the thorough-going energy and profound wisdom with which that people faced the great transitional period in their career, when the spirit of modernity, progress, and education, swept over their wholesome youth like a gale, and they were saved to the church in a body by the founding of church schools, and very good ones.

We ought not to be slow in following so universal an example as that which enforces the absolute necessity of church education. It is impossible that any informed person can doubt that necessity. The only question that remains is: Do we love the church sufficiently to provide for its future? Are we willing to make sacrifices to that end? Do we wish our churches to have faithful pastors who have never known anything but Brethren training, and who, we may say, have been so *soundly* trained that they will be perfectly safe against those "winds of doctrine," and those fads which sometimes work so much havoc in congregations. The *most fundamental*, the *most vital* work that is being done today in the Brethren church is that which is being done at Ashland College and at the cost of much sacrifice. Will we as a church rally to this work? Will we make it great and strong, or will we let it drag out a precarious existence, a living death? As much as a man loveth his own life, should the church come up to the help of the work at Ashland College.